

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1552

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJECT: CUNHAL PRESS CONFERENCE

SUMMARY: CUNHAL MET PRESS IN SMOOTH PERFORMANCE JANUARY 27. EMPHASIZED PCP SUPPORT FOR AFM; DENIED THAT COMMUNISTS OPPOSE ELECTION FOR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY; INDICATED WILLINGNESS TO CONSIDER FUTURE OF COALITION WITH FELLOW COALITION MEMBERS; AND ALSO DENIED RUMORS LINKING PCP TO POSSIBLE COUP ATTEMPT. END SUMMARY.

1. IN AFTERNOON PRESS CONFERENCE ON JANUARY 27 COMMUNIST PARTY (PCP) SECRETARY-GENERAL ALVARO CUNHAL HAD DISTRIBUTED PROGRAMMATIC PCP DOCUMENT (BEING CARRIED FBIS) ENTITLED "THE PORTUGUESE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE POLITICAL SITUATION." DOCUMENT APPROVED AT PLENARY MEETING OF PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE JANUARY 26. MAIN PURPOSE WAS TO PUT CUNHAL ON DISPLAY BEFORE INTERNATIONAL PRESS AND HE RESPONDED TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS ON FOLLOWING SUBJECTS:

-- ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT (AFM): CUNHAL SAID AGAIN THAT THE MOVING FORCE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS WAS THE ALLIANCE

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BETWEEN THE PEOPLE AND THE AFM.

-- ELECTIONS: CUNHAL DENIED REPORTS THAT PCP OPPOSES HOLDING ELECTION FOR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY. SAID ELECTION SHOULD BE FREE. (THIS POINT ALSO ANALYZED IN CC-PCP/DOCUMENT WHERE "FREE" QUALIFIED IN STANDARD COMMUNIST JARGON.)

-- RENOVATION OF COALITION: CUNHAL SAID HE WOULD BE WILLING TO MEET WITH AFM AND THREE COALITION PARTIES TO CONSIDER FUTURE OF COALITION. HE SAID PARTY MAKEUP OF COALITION GOVERNMENT DID NOT CORRESPOND TO POLITICAL EQUILIBRIUM IN PORTUGAL. HOWEVER, PCP IS NOT LOOKING FOR MORE MINISTERS IN GOVERNMENT. IT WANTS GOVERNMENT THAT WILL CONSTRUCT A DEMOCRATIC PORTUGAL. (COMMENT: WE TAKE THIS TO MEAN THAT PCP WOULD BE HAPPY TO SEE MORE MDP OR LEFT AFM MINISTERS IN GOVERNMENT.) HE ALSO QUESTIONED WHETHER POPULAR DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PPD) WAS SINCERE IN OFFERING A POST-ELECTORAL COALITION WITH PCP.

-- INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF AFM: CUNHAL CAME OUT STRONGLY FOR INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF AFM, BUT NOTED THAT ONLY AFM CAN DECIDE THAT ISSUE. HE ALSO SAID AFM SHOULD HAVE ROLE IN CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY.

-- POSSIBLE COUP D'ETAT: CUNHAL EMPHASITICALLY DENIED RUMORS THAT PCP WAS PLANNING COUP. ATTRIBUTED COUP TALK TO "REACTIONARY FORCES."

-- CDS CONGRESS: CUNHAL DENOUNCED VIOLENCE AS WORK OF ANTI-REVOLUTIONARY EXTREMISTS. AT SAME TIME HE CLAIMED THAT CDS INCLUDED MANY FASCISTS AND REACTIONARIES.

-- JAN 31 DEMONSTRATIONS: CUNHAL SAID THERE WAS NO NEED FOR VIOLENCE BETWEEN RIVAL PCP AND SOCIALIST DEMONSTRATIONS. HE SUGGESTED THAT JOINT DEMONSTRATION COULD BE HELD IF BOTH PARTIES WERE ON THE ROAD TO DEMOCRACY AND AGAINST THE MONOPOLIES, AND NOT AGAINST THE WORKERS.

2. COMMENT: (A) ACCORDING TO AMERICAN PRESS OBSERVERS, CUNHAL APPEARED CONFIDENT AND IMPRESSIVE. HE HAD AN EYE TOWARDS THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS AND TOOK NEW YORK TIMES QUESTION FIRST. (B) IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT CUNHAL CONTINUES THE PCP LINE OF ALL-OUT SUPPORT FOR THE AFM. (C) SOCIALIST LEADER MARIO SOARES TOLD AMBASSADOR EVENING JANUARY 27 THAT HE INTERPRETED CUNHAL'S PERFORMANCE AS A RETREAT--PRESUMABLY IN FACE OF STANCE TAKEN BY PS AND SOARES. (LISBON 464).

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Message Attributes

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